The United States Position towards the Battle of Al-Karameh and its Repercussions, March 21, 1968

This research explores the United States position towards the battle for Al-Karameh and its repercussions, March 21, 1968. It argues that despite the fact that American policy has always been completely biased in favor of Israel since its founding on May 15, 1948, its position on the battle of Al-Karameh was at the time considered supportive of Israel and balanced with Jordan and hostile to Palestinian organizations by relying mainly on the documents of the US State Department (Foreign Relations of the United States FRUS) and on some of the minutes of the Israeli parliament "Knesset" sessions (Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meetings). This research dealt with an introduction to the crystallization of the Palestinian resistance after the defeat of the Arabs in the Six-Day war of 1967, as well as the policy of the United States towards the region after this war, its position on the escalation Palestinian resistance from Jordan, and the dialectic of Jordan's control of its territories and borders. It also dealt with the incident of the bombing of the Israeli bus on March 18, 1968, and the escalation of tension, which eventually led to Israel attacking Jordan, the battle for Al-Karameh on March 21, 1968, the initial American reaction to it, and the subsequent issuance of Security Council Resolution 248 and its implications, and the official American position after the battle ended, and its support for the efforts of the Baring Peace Mission in the region, and the policy of balancing the positions of the United States between Israel and Jordan. In conclusion, reference was made to the most important results of the research.

Keywords: The United States, Israel, Jordan, Palestine, Battle of Al-Karameh.

Introduction

Israel declared war on Egypt, Jordan, and Syria on June 5, 1967, which Israel called the "Six-Day War" and the Arabs called it "Setback." It ended with the victory of Israel, the defeat of the Arabs for the third time successively, and Israel's occupation of the Sinai, Gaza Strip and the West Bank (includes East Jerusalem) and the Golan(1).

The defeat of the Arabs in this war, and the failure of Gamal Abdel Nasser’s national policy, led to a major change, as Palestinian refugees no longer wait for the Arab armies to liberate Palestine from Israel as it was before, and decided that they would carry out their own war by armed struggle to achieve It(2).

Palestinian organizations initially tried to work among the local population in the occupied territories, but they did not achieve much success in that, and

(2) "1968: Karameh and the Palestinian revolt", Telegraph, May 1, 2002.
one of the reasons for this was that Israel prevented contact between the leadership of the Palestinian people and the residents of the occupied Palestinian territories and Jerusalem, so Palestinian organizations such as Fateh Movement, led by Yasser Arafat (January 1, 1965 - November 11, 2004), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and other smaller organizations launched attacks on Israeli targets starting from Jordan, due to the presence of a large number of Palestinian refugees there, which provided them with a large popular incubator, in addition to the presence of the longest borders that helped them in carrying out military operations against Israel.

The Al-Karameh town and the adjacent small Palestinian refugee camp, just a few kilometers away from the new ceasefire lines separating Jordanian and Israeli forces, was a major base for Palestinian organizations, and Palestinian fighters locally referred to as "Fedayeen" (Palestinian fighters who are ready to fight Israel and sacrifice themselves for the Palestinian cause). The fact that Palestinian organizations launched military operations against Israel from Jordan had caused Israel to carry out counter-revenge operations, which had come to be known as "Reprisal Operations". Nevertheless, in the beginning of 1968, these organizations, headed by the largest and most powerful Fateh movement, continued to attack Israel again from their bases in Jordan, which resulted in Israeli human and material losses. King Hussein (August 11, 1952 to February 7, 1999) did not succeed in neutralizing the Palestinian military presence in the town of Al-Karameh and along the Jordanian border, and by March 1968, there were hundreds of civilians living in the town of Al-Karameh, along with about 900 from Fedayeen-most of them from Fateh movement-, who had taken headquarters in Al-Karameh.

**United States policy towards the region after the 1967 war**

The 1967 war had sparked a lot of speculation about the influence and policy of the United States in the region, so Nicholas Katzenbach, US Undersecretary of State, summarized (October 3, 1966-20 January 1969) the National Security Council meeting on the Near East. On February 21, 1968, the United States position stated that there is no indication of the fact that the...
influence of the United States in the region has deteriorated due to the recent war, but that Soviet influence, in turn, is increasing, and that the United States has lost some influence due to its relationship with Israel, and the last Arab-Israeli war under a Natural growth of Arab nationalism(10).

As for Eugene V Rostow (October 14, 1966 - January 20, 1969), Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs made the matter more specialized when he expressed his concern about the situation in Jordan and considered King Hussein to be in a real dilemma because of the organizations the Palestinians resist Israel, while simultaneously he wants to move toward a peaceful settlement with Israel, but he does not dare to do so on his own. Rostow stated that Israeli ambassador to Washington Yitzak Rabin (1968-1973) informed the US State Department that he hoped that King Hussein would finally know that if he wanted to survive, he would have to control what he called "terrorism"(11), and that that it would increase King Hussein's chances of survival, because if the Palestinian organizations had the upper hand, King Hussein would lose control of the country at the end of Ultimately, it must also make clear to the Jordanian people that they are ultimately victims of Palestinian organizations, and that if it uses sufficient force against Palestinian organizations, then he can remain king(12).

In light of these challenges, King Hussein sent a letter dated March 2, 1968 CE to American President Lyndon Johnson (November 22, 1963 - January 20, 1969), in which he emphasized the "warm close" relationship with the United States, which brings the two countries together for a long period of time, and he is pleased to receive President Johnson's confirmation that he had previously sent that the policy and interest of the United States is the continuation of this relationship with Jordan, and that all those tensions and problems created by the Six-day war did not change the basic US policy toward Jordan. And that the arms deal presented by the chief of staff Jordanian Armed Forces, Major General Amer Khammash (October 9, 1967 - October 27, 1968) to the United States was aiming to meet Jordan's legitimate requirements for acquiring weapons in order to confront the huge problems facing Jordan, and King Hussein declared that he had great hope that it would be agreed in the end to this deal in order to enable him to overcome the problems facing him(13).

(11) There is an old debate about defining acts of violence, especially when there are two contradictory points of view. Violence against Israel is considered by the Palestinian people and its supporters to be "resistance", and Israel and its supporters to be "terrorism".
(12) 120292. 1. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, February 24, 1968, 1908Z.
(13) Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, March 2, 1968, 1725Z. 3672. Subject: Letter from King Hussein to President Johnson. Ref: State 113645.
It is understood from this message that this deal may have been to confront Palestinian organizations that are launching military operations against Israel from Jordan, in light of Jordan's permanent declaration of its desire to reach a peace agreement with Israel.

On March 12, 1968, the US Department of State announced that it was pleased with King Hussein's desire to end negotiations to conclude the arms deal between the two countries as soon as possible, and requested the American Ambassador to Amman Harrison M Symmes (October 18, 1968 to May 7, 1970) that he tells the Jordanian government that the United States will increase the number of M48A1 tanks from 88 to 100 tanks, 40-mm self-propelled anti-aircraft guns from 4 to 24 cannons, and 50-mm anti-aircraft guns from 9 to 100 cannons, in addition to many weapons parts, and that the United States can't go seldom supplying Jordan with more weapons(14).

It is clear from the quantity and quality of weapons, even with the criterion of armament at the time, that these weapons are primarily defensive rather than offensive weapons, and they are certainly not able to break the strategic balance with Israel.

The United States and the dialectic of Jordan's control of its borders

The American ambassador to Amman, Harrison Symmes, stated on March 12, 1968 that, over the years, he was aware that it was impossible for the leader of a small Arab country, such as Lebanon or Jordan, to make a separate peace with Israel, and to survive, especially Jordan, and that Jordan is the most moderate and rational, so we must talk to them to find separate talks with it about peace with Israel as a last and desperate last resort. Symmes stated that he knows very well that King Hussein and many Jordanian leaders want a peaceful settlement with Israel, but that this desire for peace may not come to fruition due to the worsening situation in Jordan, especially as Israel continues to pursue policies that tend to consolidate its occupation of the West Bank, and that the strategy of manipulation that Israel pursues it by launching retaliatory raids against Jordan, and the official and semi-official Israeli threats related to revenge against Jordan do not help in this, and that the operations are bound to increase due to the policies pursued by Israel. According to Symmes, developments have shown that it will become more difficult for the Jordanian regime to suppress Palestinian organizations, and that these pose a major threat to the Jordanian regime itself, and that if the stalemate continues in the Gunnar Jarring(15), peace mission, then failure will not only occur in achieving a

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(14) 128960. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Jordan, Washington, March 12, 1968, 0007Z.
(15) The Jarring Mission refers to efforts undertaken by Gunnar Jarring to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors following the Six-Day War in 1967. He was appointed on 23 November 1967 by UN Secretary-General, U Thant, as Special Envoy under the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 242 to negotiate the implementation of the resolution.
multiple peaceful settlement, but in the chances of a successful move towards a peaceful settlement between Jordan and Israel as well, which will become very few, and the outlook for a stable and independent Jordan will become ‘darker’ More Bleak.(16)

When Symmes met King Hussein on March 14, 1968, he expressed his concern about the return of hostilities to Palestinian organizations, as had happened in the few days before their meeting. And Symmes confirmed that his information indicates that the Palestinian organizations are still working strongly in the Jordan Valley region against Israel, and that, in view of the previous events, it is feared that Israel will revenge In retaliation, despite the confession of Symmes that King Hussein has a policy against these organizations. In this meeting, King Hussein told Sims that he wanted the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Jordan, and that, once The arrival of American weapons, he will be in a strong position to remove the Iraqis, while Symmes expressed his hope that the king will begin his efforts against the Palestine Battalion 421 backed by Iraq and present on Jordanian territory, and King Hussein responded to him that he is doing everything he can to limit the activity of these Organizations. At that time, it seemed from Symmes point of view that the Israelis are doing some things that do not undermine the operations, the most important of which are unilateral Israeli actions, especially its retaliatory actions against Jordan, which severely weaken Jordan’s argument that it does not need Iraqi forces on its soil, especially since Iraqi Chief of Staff Ibrahim Faisal Al-Ansari (1967-1968) has been announced he wanted to visit Jordan soon, and that King Hussein would do everything in his power to get Iraqi forces out of his country, and King Hussein expressed his hope that Israel would not make this matter impossible. King Hussein also agreed that the operations harmed the Arab cause more than assisting them(17).

In a telegram from the American embassy in Jordan to the US State Department on March 19, 1968, King Hussein revealed the decision taken by Iraqi Chief of Staff Ibrahim Al-Ansari to gradually withdraw the Palestinian battalion 421 from Jordan to Iraq within just a week(18).

The Bombing of the Israeli Bus and the Escalation of Tension

During this American diplomatic move to at least reduce tension and achieve peace between Jordan and Israel, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan (June 5, 1967 - June 3, 1974) on March 17, 1968 warned that Palestinian guerrillas were preparing for a new wave of resistance, which Israel will take as an excuse to do what King Hussein was unable to do, that is, to

(16) 3770. 1. Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, March 12, 1968, 1615Z.
(17) 3793. Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, March 14, 1968, 0820Z. Subject: Terrorism.
(18) 3887. Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, March 19, 1968, 1915Z. Subject: Terrorism.

The next day, March 18, 1968, an Israeli school bus was detonated by a landmine 13 miles north of Eilat, killing two people: a doctor and trainer, and wounding ten children. This operation was the thirty-eighth of the Fateh movement within three months. That night, the Israeli cabinet approved the attack on the Karamah, and Israel assumed that Jordanians would stand neutral and ignore the Israeli attack.

Symmes mentioned that King Hussein decided to send Colonel Muhammed Daoud (Jordanian liaison with Israel) to meet his Israeli counterpart under the auspices of the United Nations in the next few days to contain the tension, and the Israeli government made intensive efforts to arrest those responsible for the bus bombing, and once requested any Information that might help her in the investigation, which made King Hussein speculate in some detail about the Israeli intentions towards Jordan, while he was reviewing the Arab military capabilities with his advisers, and expressed his conviction of the complete inability of the Arabs to win a military solution in any military confrontation with Israel, while Iraqi Chief of Staff Ibrahim Al-Ansari informed King Hussein that Iraq could no longer help Jordan militarily against Israel, and in return, King Hussein expressed his doubts serious of the Israelis and their desire for peace, and it was concluded that Israel wants to adhere to the Arab land it occupies for religious and cultural reasons, and that it needs to occupy certain additional areas to reinforce its position, and that Jordan is the goal that Israel wishes to occupy.

As for the Israeli bus bombing, King Hussein reminded Symmes that he had been "put into hell", and affirmed that if the perpetrators were arrested in Jordan, they would receive the same punishment as if they had caused this accident to the Jordanians and that he had sent senior investigators, Including trackers, to the area of the accident near Aqaba, and yet they did not discover any evidence that any person from Jordan’s territory in that area had crossed into the border. King Hussein also mentioned that the Jordanian intelligence service, through breaches and investigations, was unable to discover any involvement of any known Palestinian organization in this incident, and that investigations were still ongoing under his personal supervision. The king indicated the possibility that there would be Egyptian foreign involvement in

(19) "Foray into Jordan", Time, Friday, March 29, 1968.  
http://content.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601680329,00.html  
(22) 3887. Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, March 19, 1968, 1915Z. Subject: Terrorism.
that incident\(^{(23)}\), and he said it would be desirable to inform the Israelis Update on the Israeli bus accident; and the Palestinian battalion 241, and the dispatch of Colonel Muhammad Dawud. King Hussein warned that if the Israelis announced that the exit of the Palestinian battalion from Jordan was a result of Israeli pressure, he would not be able to allow her to leave later, and his efforts in this regard would be seriously compromised\(^{(24)}\).

The US State Department sent a telegram to the American Embassy in Israel on March 20, 1968, in which it stated that the Israeli ambassador to Washington, Yitzhak Rabin, had been called at 15:00 US time to clarify the following points:

First: The United States government is deeply concerned about reports from its embassy in Jordan, and other indications that Israel is calling in reserve soldiers, and is taking measures that indicate its desire to carry out imminent military retaliation against Jordan.

Second: The United States of America understands the feeling of anger in Israel after the attack on the Israeli school bus, however, the United States considers that the Israeli military reprisals are self-defeating, and seriously harm the hopes of a peaceful solution to the problems of the region.

Third: More Israeli retaliatory actions against Jordan would be a major and perhaps fatal blow to the Jarring Mission and to American interests in Jordan, and would seriously undermine the ability of the United States to influence the Arab position in order to achieve constructive directions that are in Israel's best interest as much as it is in the interests of the United States.

Fourth: Any Israeli military retaliation will be a regrettable measure, at a time when it appears that Jordan will take steps to fight the resistance, which is what Israel has been seeking for a while\(^{(25)}\).

In a memorandum from Rostow the Assistant to US President Johnson on March 20, 1968, Rostow confirmed that the Israelis are massing their forces on the border with Jordan, even though the American ambassador to Israel Walworth Barbour (May 11, 1961 - January 19, 1973) confirmed that the Israeli decision of the final attack on Jordan has not yet been taken and that the rapid Israeli military move stemmed from the growing concern about the continuation of the Palestinian resistance, that the Israelis do not believe that King Hussein made a real and sufficient effort to suppress Palestinian organizations and that after the bombing of the Israeli bus and incidents of sabotage likewise, the pressure for revenge in Israel has become irresistible. So King Hussein asked the United States to help repel the Israelis, because he feared that the major Israeli attack on his country would be the end, leading to the elimination of the Jarring Mission, and Rostow stressed that this would

\(^{(23)}\) Loc. Cit.
\(^{(24)}\) Loc. Cit.
\(^{(25)}\) 133284. 1. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, March 20, 1968, 1943Z.
make the US position unhappy, especially if Israel decided to occupy additional lands of Jordan\(^{(26)}\).

Because of the escalating tension in the Middle East, and because of the Israeli build-up on the Jordan border, the US State Department sent a telegram from US President Johnson to the American embassy in Israel on March 21, 1968, and they were asked to deliver it urgently to Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, saying: Johnson Deplores what he called recent operations against Israeli lives and property. Nevertheless, he expresses his conviction fully that any military retaliation against Jordan would be a major error in appreciation, and this action will have devastating consequences for the hopes of peacemaking and the future of the region, and that it is in the interest of the United States and Israel that no such action should be taken and that he is making his effort in return for King Hussein in order to make every effort to stop the resistance\(^{(27)}\).

In a similar step, Johnson sent a telegram on the same day to teleport it quickly to King Hussein, where Johnson expressed his appreciation for King Hussein's efforts to control Palestinian organizations, such as the bus bombing on March 18, 1968, that would destroy hopes for peace Subscriber in the Middle East. Johnson appealed to King Hussein to make every effort to put such incidents under strict control, and that King Hussein must resolve to maintain an environment free from this violence, and he told him that he appealed to the Israeli Prime Minister Levy Eshkol in return for the exercise of restraint\(^{(28)}\).

Menachem Begin, the Israeli minister (without portfolio), states that during the day before the Battle of Al-Karameh, Israel received five different messages from the United States of America, including one from President Johnson himself, asking her to refrain from a military operation\(^{(29)}\).

The Beginning of the Battle of Al-Karameh

After Israel's shocking victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) expected that any operation in the Jordanian town of Al-Karama would be "a picnic"\(^{(30)}\). Whereas, by March 20, 1968, Jordan was fully aware of the various Israeli military build-up, the Jordanian army had therefore

\(^{(26)}\) Action Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, Washington, March 20, 1968, 7:25 p.m. Subject: Urgent Message to Eshkol.
\(^{(27)}\) 133886. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, March 21, 1968, 0511Z.
\(^{(28)}\) 133887. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Jordan, Washington, March 21, 1968, 0540Z.

taken positions near the bridges separating the two countries, and the artillery had been deployed to the upper Jordan Valley highlands overlooking Al-Karamah town to obtain a strategic advantage (31).

Prior to the Israeli attack on Al-Karamah, the IDF Chief of Staff, Haim Bar-Lev (1968-1971), stated that the Israeli Air Force (IAF) had received leaflets informing the Jordanian army that Israel had no intention of harming them and that they should not interfere in any upcoming battle, but the post did not receive any attention, but rather led to Palestinian fighters heading in large numbers to confront Israeli forces in the town of Al-Karamah (32).

At 5:30 am on March 21, 1968, the Israeli forces attacked at the same time the Jordan River through the bridges that separated them from Jordan (33), where soldiers and paratroopers crossed, alongside tanks, armored vehicles and other vehicles Allenby Bridge south of Al-Karamah and Damiya Bridge north of it, in a movement of pincers, was aimed at attacking Palestinian militants in two directions. Israeli forces also moved south of the Dead Sea near the town of Ghor Al-Safi, and paratroopers were dispatched east of Al-Karamah to cut off the road to any withdrawal of Palestinian fighters (34), and when the Israeli forces began their incursion into Al-Karamah they Met Stiff resistance by Fateh movement fighters and other Palestinian organizations, backed by artillery and Jordanian forces (35).

The Israeli force in charge of the attack penetrated the town of Al-Karamah at 7:00 am (36), and by 8:00, they took control of the town, and these forces discovered that Al-Karamah was the largest base of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) organizations previously perceived (37).

Despite the partial success achieved by the Israeli forces in Al-Karamah, these forces were frustrated by their inability to surround the entire forces of the PLO factions, especially Fateh movement, and were surprised by the violent resistance of these factions and the standing of the Jordanian Army on their side. Their frustration was further aggravated by their inability to achieve rapid victory as they had hoped, and as was the case in all their previous wars. So the IDF leadership decided to withdraw but later had to fight again to withdraw from Jordan to Israeli territory (38).

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(33) 133886. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, March 21, 1968, 0511Z (Note: 3); Pollack. Arabs, 332–333.
(34) "Battle of Al-Karama, A Triggering Moment for the Palestinian Resistance", *Palestinian journeys*.
(36) Morris, Righteous, 369.
(38) "Foray into Jordan", *Time*, March 29, 1968.
The End of the Battle of Al-Karameh

The IDF began withdrawing on the same evening, during which 156 fighters of the PLO factions were killed, about 100 others were wounded, 141 other fighters were captured, while Jordanian forces lost between 40-86 soldiers, and wounded 108, 250 soldiers, and the capture of 4 other soldiers. As for Israel, it lost 28-33 soldiers, wounded between 69-161 others, 27 tanks were destroyed, and 4 other tanks were left behind.

The relatively high Israeli losses were big and surprising for the Israelis, and this is why the battle of Al-Karameh of the PLO and Fateh factions provided a huge boost and a great propaganda service. This battle immediately became a synonym for Palestinian courage and valor, less than one year before Israel defeated the Arab armies in the Six-Day War. The battle of Al-Karameh was not merely a victory in a battle, but a history that brought the Palestinian issue and the Palestinians back to the political map.

The head of the chief of bureau of the then Israeli Foreign Ministry, Gideon Rafael (1968-1972), admitted when he said: "The operation gave an enormous lift to Yasser Arafat's Fateh movement and irrevocably implanted the Palestinian problem onto the international agenda, no longer as a humanitarian issue of homeless refugees, but as a claim to Palestinian Statehood.

The battle of Al-Karameh also made Arabs and Palestinians realize that Israel could be defeated and forced to recalculate its potential again, and they considered it a psychological victory over the IDF, which was seen as an invincible after its victory in 3 battles against Arabs even then.

The American Reaction to the Battle

Harold H. Saunders of the National Security Council sent a memo to President Johnson on March 21, 1968, informing him that Israel had begun a

(41) Herzog - Gazit. The Arab-Israeli, 205; Morris. Righteous, 369
(42) Tucker - Roberts. Encyclopedia, I, 569–573
(44) "1968: Karameh and the Palestinian revolt", Telegraph, May 1, 2002.
(45) Grid. "March 21"; Warschawski. "Karameh".
major attack on the bases of Palestinian organizations on the eastern bank of
the Jordan River. Saunders confirmed that Johnson's message to Ashkhol
arrived after the attack (8:45 pm EST), and that Ashkul told him that this raid
would be "limited", and that the Israeli forces would withdraw as soon as they
finished their mission to prevent and disarm the activities of Palestinian
organizations and disarm\(^{48}\).

Saunders emphasized in this memo that the United States faces 3 issues:

1. The United States will likely delay the signing of the US Aid
   Agreement to Israel known as PL480, which was to be signed at 10:30
   am on March 21, 1968 US time, and Saunders confirmed that he did not
   see an opportunity to sign this new agreement on the same day, and that
   it was necessary for the United States to say that everyone would be
   "very busy" too Busy that day, bearing in mind avoiding any indication
   that this delay is punishment for anyone.

2. The United States is considering issuing an early statement based on the
   idea that more violence cannot bring peace to the Middle East, and that
   "our concern and dismay" be expressed about Israeli military action
   against Jordan, and that it can hardly be silent about that, with the need
   to be as cautious as possible towards local Jewish opinion in the United
   States.

3. Saunders confirmed that he has no indication until that time that there
   will be a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, but the
   possibility of this happening is clear\(^{49}\).

After the battle for Al-Karameh began, King Hussein sent President
Johnson on March 21, 1968, a message saying: "We are now fighting once
again, defending ourselves in the face of blatant and deliberate Israeli
aggression". King Hussein affirmed that he was defending his country in this
war with the remaining weapons in their hands since the June 1967 war, in
light of the lack of a final agreement with the "friendly" United States in order
to re-supply Jordan with defense equipment, and that it was because Israeli
aggression, Jordan, its Head of State, its leaders, its armed forces, and its
people have all become "victims" of American weapons, and that his faith and
belief in Jordan and the United States and its president and friendship; made
Jordan rejects any other choice in order to strengthen the defensive weapons
from any country in the face of the history of the continuing aggression of
Israel. King Hussein affirmed that neither he, his government, nor his armed
forces, would bear and will not be responsible for the safety and security of the
Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank, and the rest of the occupied Arab
territories, and that he was not expected to be responsible for this matter\(^{50}\).

\(^{48}\) Information Memorandum From Harold H. Saunders of the National Security Council
Staff to President Johnson, Washington, March 21, 1968, 7:45 a.m.

\(^{49}\) Loc. Cit.

\(^{50}\) 3928. Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, March
21, 1968, 1030Z.
King Hussein also affirmed once again that after a thorough investigation into the incident of the Israeli bus bombing, no results had been reached regarding the perpetrators in Jordan, that he was doing his best honestly and sincerely to lay the foundation for a just and lasting peace in the region, and that if there was blame because of the failure, it must fall directly on the Israeli side, and on those who encourage Israel, knowingly or unknowingly, in its plan to destroy the first and last opportunity to achieve peace\textsuperscript{(51)}.

The Jordanian Ambassador in Amman Symmes mentioned that the message of the American President to King Hussein on March 21, 1968 had reached him three hours after the Israeli attack on the town of Al-Karameh began within the Jordanian border, and that this message had sparked a very negative reaction to King Hussein, and it appears that the king was particularly upset by what he considered a hint that the United States of America held Jordan responsible for the Israeli bus bombing, and that he was not sincere in efforts to control Palestinian organizations\textsuperscript{(52)}.

\textbf{Security Council Resolution 248 and its Implications}

After the battle of Al-Karameh ended, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 248 on March 24, 1968, unanimously (15 countries, including the United States of America), and the resolution states:

1. Regret over the loss of life and serious damage to property.
2. Condemn the military action launched by Israel in flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and ceasefire resolutions.
3. Denounce all violent incidents that violate the ceasefire, and declare that military reprisals and other grave ceasefire violations cannot be tolerated.
4. Call on Israel to desist from actions or activities contrary to Resolution 237 (of 1967)\textsuperscript{(53)}.

\textbf{The American Position after the Battle is Over}

The American ambassador to United Nations Arthur Goldberg (28 July 1965 – 24 June 1968) said: "We believe that the military counteractions such as those which have just taken place, on a scale out of proportion to the acts of violence that preceded it, are greatly to be deplored"\textsuperscript{(54)}.

The Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban (January 13, 1966 - June 2, 1974) also spoke about the harsh reactions to the Al-Karameh battle around the world, stressing that the American position was particularly troublesome, when

\textsuperscript{(51)} Loc. Cit
\textsuperscript{(52)} Loc. Cit
\textsuperscript{(54)} Grid, Jewdayo. "March 21".
the United States considered the operation a disproportionate and unnecessary attack, the matter which ultimately led to an increase in Fateh’s Movement power. In a media note from Rostow to President Johnson on March 22, 1968, Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, who mentioned the Israeli justifications for their recent attack on Jordan, replied that the Israelis had gathered much evidence that Palestinian organizations were planning a coordinated attack in the spring and summer of 1968 within the Israeli territories. Eshkol claimed that the Israelis seized Soviet documents and weapons to prove this. While Eshkol was working to achieve better control of the borders with Jordan, Symmes was assuring him of the determination of the United States to return attention and focus on the Jarring Peace Mission, and that the debate on this mission is still continuing, and the success that it can achieve regarding that, and that a future mission would also depend on the results of the Arab Summit that King Hussein requested to convene after the Israeli attack on the town of Al-Karameh.

As for the Israeli Prime Minister, he said on March 22, 1968, that Israel received a clear message from the American administration that the large-scale military operation contradicts American interests in the region. Eshkol explained to the American administration that Israel would proceed in diplomatic talks with Jarring as scheduled. On the day the US State Department sent a telegram to The American Embassy in Israel on March 23, 1968, reports that Eshkol reviewed the Palestinian military operations, the most recent of which was the "Gruesome attack" on the Israeli bus carrying Israeli children on March 18, 1968, confirming that Fateh movement decided to develop its operations against Israel by undertaking With open, frank, organized, and legitimate operations in the eyes of King Hussein, instead of carrying out secret operations only. This would be done during the spring and summer of 1968. The Jordanian leaders tolerate and sometimes encourage violations against the security of the State of Israel, and do not contribute to a ceasefire or the implementation of international obligations, which threatens Jordan’s independence, and pushes Jordan and Israel to conflict again, and that the attack by Israel on the town of Al-Karameh against Fateh movement should not cause any remorse for Israel, the Israeli government, or the United States, that it would be ‘destructive’ for the United Nations to avoid its duty by harshly criticizing Fateh movement operations from Jordan against Israel, and that orders had been issued to the IDF not to harm civilians in the battle of Al-Karameh, and that this cost Israel a heavy price, and that King Hussein must understand that the Jordanian army was not a target for the Israel Defense

(56) Information Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, Washington, March 22, 1968, 7:35 p.m. Subject: Reply from Eshkol.
Forces, although the Jordanian army sometimes succumbed to pressure from Fateh movement\(^{(58)}\).

The US State Department also stated that King Hussein was then better able to promote a ceasefire and move toward peace through negotiation, and that Israeli Foreign Minister Aba Eban told Jarring that the Israeli government was still accepting his proposal to hold a peace conference with Arab countries in Nicosia and that it would work with him patiently despite Jamal Abdel Nasser’s irresponsible rejection of this proposal\(^{(59)}\). Aba Eban once again considered that the Jordanians are still showing their readiness for peace with Israel, and that he spoke with the American administration, which asked Israel to reduce its actions in East Jerusalem, and to make some gestures towards Palestinian refugees, in order to persuade Jordan to peace\(^{(60)}\).

In a memo to President Johnson on March 26, 1968, Rostow said that after weeks of negotiation, the arms deal for Jordan was ready to sign, and that the plan was to sign the deal without announcing it, after negotiations that lasted a few weeks. and it may not be that time is the best time to announce the deal in light of the ongoing Palestinian attacks against Israel, and the Israeli attack on Al-Karameh within the Jordanian borders, however, there may not be any good time to announce the deal, and the main purpose of this matter is to strengthen the authority of the King Hussein, although the weapons in this deal will not reach Jordan at the same time\(^{(61)}\).

It seems that the United States wanted this deal to balance its relationship with Jordan on the one hand and with Israel on the other, and that the approval of this deal was a kind of compensation for the Israeli attack on Jordan, and an attempt to encourage Jordan to continue peace efforts, and to fight the operations carried out by Palestinian organizations against Israel.

Therefore, Rusk gave a fresh indication that the United States will make efforts again to prevent further Israeli attacks on Jordan, that the United States’ opposition to Israel’s retaliatory raids on Jordan comes as it does towards opposing operations against Israel, and that the United States appreciates that the problem of King Hussein lies in controlling Palestinian operations in light of the lack of progress towards a peaceful settlement, and that no Israeli government can resist the pressure of the internal policy that drives them to take another military action if operations continue again in Israeli territory, and as regards the increasing intensity of these operations, security considerations have always prevailed over the Israeli government\(^{(62)}\).

Rusk stressed that it is clear that achieving a just and acceptable peace on both sides is the only true solution to the problem of Palestinian operations, and

\(^{(58)}\) 135561. 1. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, March 23, 1968, 2001Z.

\(^{(59)}\) Loc. Cit


\(^{(61)}\) Action Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, Washington, March 26, 1968, 8:10 p.m. Subject: Signing Jordan Arms Package.

\(^{(62)}\) 137662. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Jordan, Washington, March 28, 1968, 0138Z.
that the ways in which the United States can assist Jarring’s efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement should be actively examined. However, if the cycle of Palestinian operations and Israeli reprisal raids continues, the situation will rapidly deteriorate to the point of no return. Rusk stated that work should continue to work for more flexibility in the Israeli position, but at the same time, it is necessary for Jordanians to show a great deal of control over the activities of Palestinian organizations. Unfortunately, the United States has no plan to present it to Jordanians to control organizations. Rusk stressed that the US government is not absent from the efforts made by the Jordanian government or the moderate and constructive course that it followed, and they are concerned about the situation that appears to be going in dangerous directions away from peace\(^{(63)}\).

The American administration stressed once again that the operations constitute a threat that Israel must do with it, and that Israel’s efforts to end these operations with military counterattacks will not succeed, and that if they continue on this path, everyone will see an endless spiral of attack and counterattack in all the Arabs at the Arab Summit continued to reject the political solution and declare their commitment to the guerrilla war carried out by the Palestinian organizations against Israel, and that the Israelis began to do this thing, although they feel that they have to respond to these operations in one way or another, and they see no alternative to this\(^{(64)}\).

The US administration also confirmed that the only party that can stop operations from Jordanian territory is the Jordanian government. Consequently, the problem is to persuade King Hussein to cease these actions or work to create conditions that enhance his standing enough to suppress them, with an agreement that Israeli military attacks do not enhance his standing, and that it may not be too late for King Hussein to neutralize Palestinian organizations or Stopping them by force, and that the alternative to violence lies from the point of view of the US government in putting Jarring peace talks on the road, and that the alternative to peace is to allow the force to play its role\(^{(65)}\).

She also stressed that the problem is that only the Israelis decide to shoot when the pressure of operations escalates, leaving the United States in a worse position every time Israel responds, in light of the real risk that the Security Council will vote the United Nations to impose sanctions against Israel, and most importantly, that Israel is also in a worse situation if it does not stop the spiral of guerrilla war\(^{(66)}\).

In a conversation between Harold Sand Rice and Ephraim Evron, the Israeli Minister at the Israeli Embassy in Washington they spoke basically about the Israeli attack on Al-Karameh town and what the Israelis see at the end of their course of escalating operations and counter-retaliatory attacks,

\(^{(63)}\) Loc. Cit.  
\(^{(64)}\) Memorandum From Harold H. Saunders of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow), Washington, March 29, 1968. Subject: Next Step with Israel-Jordan.  
\(^{(65)}\) Loc. Cit.  
\(^{(66)}\) Loc. Cit.
although the results of the military review of the attack on the town of Al-Karameh are not yet over. Evron noted in this meeting that the Israelis were not necessarily satisfied with this type of attack as the best way to combat organizations and that they would test other methods like Building a fence extending from the Dead Sea to the Sea of Galilee (Tiberias), and this was the reason why Israel ordered so many anti-personnel mines as quickly as possible from the United States, and Evron stressed that he was fully prepared to recognize that Israeli counter-attacks would not stop operations. When Sanders asked about his opinion of how the Israelis could expect to stop activities on the ground that Israelis do not control, then Evron responded that the main problem was convincing King Hussein of the need to carry out the task of controlling his lands and preventing operations. And then Sanders told him that he did not believe that the Israeli counterattacks would do that either, Evron did not agree with him, but he did not argue with the same strength that he used to do. Evron emphasized in this meeting: King Hussein is weak to the degree that the Palestinians are only alone that are able to control leadership in Jordan. However, the facts of the matters proved that Evron’s words were false to the truth, as King Hussein was able, within only two years, to impose his authority and sovereignty on the ground, and to permanently liquidate the Palestinian resistance and remove it from Jordan.

The Balance Policy after the Battle of Al-Karameh

American diplomacy did not stop after the battle of Al-Karameh, so Harold Sanders sent to Rostow on April 1, 1968, another memorandum stressing the need for US President Johnson to use pressure on Israel, and begin to rebalance the position of the United States of America toward the Arabs, and that the best bet for the United States is to focus on changing Israel’s position by Persuasion - rather than pressure - in order to give the Jarring Mission a real opportunity to achieve peace, and that it must be ensured that doing something close to this is better than letting the forces in the Middle East play its role, given the possibility that the next Arab summit will commit to guerrilla war against Israel instead of a political solution, and this calls upon Israel clearly signal She did not want to put obstacles in the way of the Jarring Mission, and this is difficult in light of the crisis of the Israeli cabinet, and Eshkol’s desire to preserve the coalition that makes up his government. On April 4, 1968, US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach sent a note to President Johnson expressing deep concern about the recent developments in the Middle East, which give the Soviet Union the opportunity

(68) Loc. Cit.
(69) Memorandum From Harold H. Saunders of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow), Washington, April 1, 1968, Subject: The President’s Decision and the Near East.
to exploit provocative operations and Israeli military retaliation against it, and that it is clear that Palestinian guerrillas have strengthened their gains due to King Hussein's inability to deal with this matter due to the apparent weakness of his regime, along with reduced sympathy for Israel and increased doubts about its peaceful intentions. Therefore, Baring must try to reach some gestures on the part of the Israelis, and the Arabs should obtain some conviction regarding the continued Israeli interest in reaching a political settlement, and this would strengthen King Hussein's position.

Nevertheless, on April 5, 1968, Rostow affirmed that Eshkol's approach to Baring's mission was very general, while King Hussein expressed his willingness to accept this plan, and that there is an express judgment that if the United States fails on this tour, they will face a very grim possibility, and this track confirmed Israel's demand for large quantities of anti-personnel mines (400,000) from the United States, where Evron said that the urgently needed mines coincided with the creation of a security belt to prevent infiltration of Palestinian fighters along sensitive areas of the ceasefire line. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs, Rodger P Davies (1965-1970), gave a personal response to Evron's request that since the United States government took a strong public stance criticizing policy of Israeli military retaliation, it is preferable to cooperate in taking measures to provide alternatives to that policy, and that it would be embarrassing to use American-manufactured mines in military countermeasures to Jordan, so Evron quickly replied that he was authorized to announce to him that the mines would only be used in a project to close and guarantee Israeli border Night only.

Whatever the case, President Johnson expressed to Levi Eshkol his deep sympathy for the serious problems posed by the ongoing operations against Israel, as well as his deep concern about the prospects of not achieving peace in the Middle East. Yet Johnson expressed his belief that military action crossed the ceasefire lines. It does not deter the kind of operations that Israel faces, but it leads to more insecurity, and that Israel's true security lies only in achieving Peace, that everyone is at a crossroads in this regard in the Near East, and that the only peace-making process available at that time is the Baring mission. Johnson expressed his deep concern regarding the lack of tangible results for this mission, and the accumulated deterioration of the situation resulting from the increase in military operations and countermeasures carried out by Israel, which seriously affects the internal life of Jordan. Johnson confirmed that there is very little time. However, there is still an opportunity for an active peace

(70) Memorandum From Acting Secretary of State Katzenbach to President Johnson, Washington, April 4, 1968, Subject: Middle East Problem.
(71) Action Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, Washington, April 5, 1968, 9:20 p.m.
(72) 142978. 1. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, April 6, 1968, 0229Z.
strategy, and this may be the last chance for the success of the Baring Peace Mission(73).

Conclusion

The study concluded that the position of the United States of America was supportive of the right of Israel to defend itself against Palestinian military actions launched from Jordan. At the same time, the United States affirmed its position in favor of the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Jordan as its ally State. Therefore, it rejected the Israeli military countermeasures against Jordan before and after the events of the Battle of Al-Karameh. Considering that these measures will not stop these operations against them, and will not give them the security they seek and that security can only be by achieving peace. Therefore the United States strongly supported the Baring peace mission and made its efforts to achieve this peace between Israel and the Arabs, and for the difficulty of the matter, the United states worked for a bilateral peace between Israel and Jordan. The United States also incited Jordan several times to act against Palestinian organizations that it described as a "terrorist", and repeatedly demanded that it fulfill its duty to stop its hostilities against Israel, and the United States agreement to supply Jordan with defensive weapons - which do not prejudice the military balance with Israel - may have come within that matter.

Bibliography


(73) 142988. 1. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, April 6, 1968, 0516Z.


